

Pest Update (March 7-14, 2012)

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Note: samples containing living tissue may only be accepted from South Dakota. Please do not send samples of dying plants or insects from other states. If you live outside of South Dakota and have a question, instead please send a digital picture of the pest or problem. **Walnut samples may not be sent in from any location – please provide a picture!**

Available on the net at:

<http://sdda.sd.gov/Forestry/Educational-Information/PestAlert-Archives.aspx>

Any treatment recommendations, including those identifying specific pesticides, are for the convenience of the reader. Pesticides mentioned in this publication are generally those that are most commonly available to the public in South Dakota and the inclusion of a product shall not be taken as an endorsement or the exclusion a criticism regarding effectiveness. Please read and follow all label instructions and the label is the final authority for a product's use on a particular pest or plant. Products requiring a commercial pesticide license are occasionally mentioned if there are limited options available. These products will be identified as such but it is the reader's responsibility to determine if they can legally apply any product identified in this publication.

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Current information

How can I germinate the acorns I collected?



This was a question posed last week. Germinating oaks from acorns is actually fairly easy to do. Hopefully the acorns were not collected last fall and storage in a shoebox in the warm house. All acorns have to go through a cold period to complete germination and most will not germinate if kept warm for the winter. You might just want to discard those and go out to collect some acorns from the ground around the tree. This is best done

in the fall as there is a lot of competition from squirrels and birds. Next examine the gathered acorns and discard any that have small holes (indication of weevil damage) or obvious decay (soft discolored spots). Place the ones that pass this test into a bucket of water and discard any that float to the top. The ones that are left have a good chance of germinating.

Bur oak acorns should have been planted last fall. Bur oaks, as with many members of the white oak group, begin their germination process in the warm fall soils. However if you did not get around to planting till now (assuming the acorns were not kept above freezing this winter) you still may have some success. Plant the acorns at a depth of about three times their diameter and I recommend placing some chicken wire over the acorns to keep the squirrels from digging them up. Water the soil and add a thin layer of mulch or straw.

Red oaks (pictured above), and other members of the red oak group such as pin oak, begin their germination in the spring so these can be planted – after the screening mentioned above – into good garden soil as the soils warm this spring.

If you collect good acorns and follow these instructions you might achieve a 30 percent germination rate, meaning 3 seedlings from every 10 acorns planted. However, if acorns were kept in a warm location during the winter, expect less than 1 seedling for every 50 acorns, probably not worth the effort.



The maple syrup season may be over before it starts

Usually I put in an article on how to tap your sugar maple, silver maple, or even your boxelder, to gather the sugary sap from the trees for coffee sweeter or even syrup. However this year, the sap season appears to be a “bust” across Minnesota and eastern

South Dakota. The ideal weather for sap productions is warm sunny days in the 40s and 50s and nights in the 20s with snow still on the ground. This spring we had no snow and the days have been warm, almost hot, and the nights are staying above freezing as well. Some producers that normally have collected several hundred gallons of sap by mid-March have collected less than a gallon this past weekend. The sap season ends when the trees break bud, an event only weeks away so until the weather becomes cooler we may see a dismay maple syrup season.

How have evergreens performed in this warm winter weather?



Reports of desiccation injury on arborvitae, junipers and yews are beginning to come in from the southern part of the state. The combination of warm temperatures and dry soils have left many of these plants in poor conditions and very susceptible to desiccation. This injury appears as yellow to browning foliage that will turn red in the next few weeks. The only control is to begin watering these evergreens as soon as the ground can absorb moisture, now in many areas of the state, and prune off any branches as they die. I would delay the pruning until it is obvious that the branch has died. Some lightly discolored branches may recover, however “once red, it’s dead” and should be pruned off. We may also see an increase in phomopsis injury on arborvitae and junipers due to the twig injury. The disease can be managed with an application of a copper fungicide applied as the new growth begins expanding this spring and then repeated for about 3 times, 10 to 14 days apart.

We may also see an increase in desiccation injury on young evergreen plantings in windbreaks. Spruce are also vulnerable to winter desiccation injury, and even pines to a lesser extent, and expect to see some of the same symptoms on young trees planted this last spring – yellowing to reddening foliage. Now is the time to check the buds on the tips of seedling branches and twigs exhibiting discolored foliage. If the buds are dry and discolored the shoot will not expand and the branch or even the entire seedling may be dead. I also expect to see desiccation injury on blue spruce, regardless of age, it is not a very tolerant tree of this type of injury.

An update on flooding injury along the Missouri River

I had an opportunity to visit Dakota Dunes and review the tree damage from the flooding last summer. The ‘point’ at the Dunes was heavily impacted with many trees uprooted from the force of the moving water. The trees that are standing generally performed as predicted. The cottonwoods appear to have survived the



flood with little affect, some trees still put out 2 to 3 feet of growth last year despite standing in water up to 5 feet on their trunks for several months. Boxelders performed equally as well and the green ash also survived though the shoot growth on ash that endured the flooding was much less than normal, often only a few inches compared to the more normal 12 to 18 inches. Fruit trees and other small flowering trees died, most before last summer was over but these trees are noted for their vulnerability to flood-injury and are often killed by 30 days of flooding. The pines and spruce that were also either in standing water or in soils that were saturated with ground water also are dying. Oaks, elms, catalpas and honeylocust

fared well if the water was moving and the flooding was limited to ground water, rather than water up along the trunk. The only real surprise was hackberries. These are noted for being moderately tolerant of flooding but from Pierre to Dakota Dunes I have been found that not to be the case with many of these trees killed by the flood.

E-sample



I received a picture of a declining Austrian pine from a resident of Dakota Dunes during the past week. The Dunes were heavily impacted by the summer flooding last year but this property was not in the flood area. Stopped to look at the tree this past weekend and the foliage showed symptoms, needles with dead tips and yellow banding, that are commonly associated with dothistroma needle blight. We saw a lot of needle and twig

diseases problems on pines last spring and summer and we may continue to see these problems again this summer.

Samples received

Campbell County
plants?

Is this herbicide injury on these

This sample apparently was missed in the switch from one office to the new one. A homeowner noticed dieback on a pear, apple and other plants about the time an adjacent field was sprayed. The dieback observed on the samples submitted could be associated with improper herbicide application but also with numerous other causes. Best means of dealing with suspected herbicide claims is to contact the Department of Agriculture in Pierre (605-773-4432) and ask to file a pesticide complaint. They will come out to investigate and will determine if a particular application may be the reason for the decline or death of plantings.

Douglas County
spruce brought in by Vivian?

What is wrong with this Black Hills

The note said that the interior needles had been dropping and it started last summer. The only sign of a pest on the sample, and there were plenty, was the white, tear-shaped, bumps covering the needs, the dead females of the pine needle scale. The pine needle scale overwinters as eggs beneath the dead mom so spraying now will not help. However, later the plant can be treated with horticultural oil when common lilac is in full bloom to kill the young scale crawlers as they hatch and come out from beneath the shell.



Lake County
graft to send in.

An interesting

This was not the usual sample! There was nothing wrong with the plant but instead a willow branch that grafted back into the stem. This is an occasional occurrence with willows and some folks will force these

types of grafts to create artwork and even decorative furniture.

Walworth County
brought in by Dean?

What is wrong with this blue spruce

There are no signs of any pathogen, insect or mite on the sample. The needles are showing some discoloration and are already dry and shedding. The buds at the end of the twigs are brown and dead. These symptoms are common with environmental problems such as wet soils and winter desiccation. Without seeing the site I cannot tell what might be the underlying cause of the symptoms but if the rest of the plant is the same as the branch submitted – it's dead. See the section above on evergreen desiccation injury for more information on a probable cause.